

Minutes

On Call: Lorraine Davis, Charles "Red" Gates, Gloria Goodwin, Betty Jo Graveen, Mary Greene-Trottier, Yunus Lahkani, Chris Peters, Roxanna Newsom, Susie Roy, & Sharon Wheeler; CDC-Susan Anderson & Lorraine Whitehair; AMS-Cathie Smith; FSA-Sharon Hadder & Dr. Talari Jude; FNS- Special Allen, Rosalind Cleveland, Karen Kell, Mavis Perry, Nancy Theodore, Madeline Viens, & Sheldon Gordon

I. Welcome

New and returning Work Group members were welcomed to the group for the FY2009/2010 food package review cycle. The roles and responsibilities of the Work Group were discussed as well as goals for the review cycle. Minutes from the NAFDPIR meeting in June 2008 were read to provide new members as well as returning members the accomplishments made during the last cycle.

II. Update on New Foods to the Food Package

Work Group members discussed the pros and cons of the new foods added during the last cycle: beef roast, turkey ham, canned chicken, fresh tomatoes, and 1% low fat UHT milk.

A. Beef Roast: Work Group members reported that the frozen beef roast has been well accepted among participants. Participants prefer the frozen meats to canned meat food offerings.

B. Canned Chicken: Work Group members reported that this product has a low take rate. They indicated that participants are not fond of the type of meat in the can. Some participants have gone as far as taking the can in their food package, but then tossing the product in the garbage before leaving the distribution site. The canned chicken appears to be stringy and did not have discernible chunks as described in the food specification. AMS indicated that the type of chicken fowl (spent hen) versus broiler chicken may be the cause for the unacceptable meat texture. It was mentioned again that participants prefer frozen meats to canned meats.

C. Fresh Tomatoes: This product appears to be well received by participants. Some members did report that quality was sometimes an issue. FNS reminded Work Group members to work closely with their DoD vendor to ensure they are in receipt of good quality fresh fruits and vegetables.

D. Turkey Ham: Work Group members reported that the turkey ham is not moving due to lack of familiarity with the product, its taste, and limited usage. Some Work Group members have reported that even with nutrition education efforts, participants still do not want to take it in their food package. Participants reported that the turkey ham has a smoky, salty taste, and unacceptable texture. Participants prefer regular ham and do not fully understand the rationale for the turkey ham product. Work Group members suggested replacing the turkey ham with possibly frozen turkey breasts. Cathie Smith from AMS will pursue the availability and cost.

E. 1% Low Fat UHT Milk: The UHT milk has been well received with no negative comments. This product has a high take rate among participants. The initial orders were under what was anticipated for this product. In addition, the rise in participation has contributed to the 1% UHT milk not being available at times in the warehouse. FNS staff has made adjustments to account for the high demand. FSA explained the procurement process regarding the number of vendors that have been awarded the bid for this product. Currently, there are 5 vendors approved to supply the 1% UHT milk.

III. Update on Recent Changes to the Food Package

A. Since the last review cycle, a few other food items have been modified in the food package. Low fat bakery mix is the only bakery mix now offered in the food package. Work Group members reported that participants have enjoyed using the low fat bakery mix and have not received any negative feedback since the regular bakery mix has been removed.

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B. Canned pumpkin and sweetpotatoes are now offered seasonally during the winter season. Work Group members indicated that this is typically when they order or have ordered these products for their participants.

C. Low sodium vegetables are being transitioned into the FDPIR food package. Currently, canned dry beans and canned tomato products (tomato sauce, spaghetti sauce, tomato paste) are being offered as low sodium foods (sodium 140 mg/serving). AMS is working closely with vegetable vendors for the upcoming purchases to start the transition of offering low sodium canned vegetables for the remaining field crops offered in the program.. FNS will be asking all programs including FDPIR to enter their orders in earlier to help with the procurement process. Vendors have asked for more lead time to shore up their capacity in order to bid on the low sodium canned vegetable invitations.

D. Whole grain rotini will be offered shortly in the food package. This product was tested at the food demonstration that took place in Green bay Wisconsin at the 2008 NAFDPIR Conference. Attendees were able to sample the whole grain rotini at the conference and provide feedback. The feedback received on the whole grain rotini was favorable, and Work Group members agreed with FNS' recommendation to offer it as part of the food package. FNS has confirmed that the whole grain rotini will be available in the warehouse later this month.

IV. Goals for the FY 09/10 Food Package Review Work Group Cycle

A. Butter Alternatives - A list of butter alternatives were given to Work Group members for review. The list contained products that would be comparable to butter in taste and usage, but with less than half the amount of fat that's in butter. The Work Group was eager to move forward with pursuing the butter alternatives. FSA will obtain more information from vendors on cost and availability for the butter alternatives. FNS Headquarters staff asked Work Group members if the cost for this type of product was high, would the Work Group consider removing canned chicken or turkey ham from the food package. The rationale was since the turkey ham and canned chicken both have low take rates it would help to keep the cost neutral for the food package.

B. Revise the Guide Rates – A suggestion was made to revise the current guide rates for the food package. Currently, there are some single category food items. When these foods are not available, the participant is left with no other options. By combining certain single food categories with like foods in other categories, this will reduce the chances of participants not receiving a full monthly package. In addition, this will give participants more options in their food package especially for 1-person households which are usually more limited due to pack size issues. The Work Group agreed that this would be of interest. FNS will provide the Work Group with some options to consider for the new guide rate.

C. Cream of Mushroom Soup – Work Group members are still interested in receiving this product as part of the food package. Previously, the Work Group was pursuing a low fat, reduced sodium cream of mushroom soup. However, this product was not commercially available for USDA to procure for the program. AMS had discussions with Ability One who had expressed interest in making this product. At the time, Ability One did not have a facility in which they could make this product available for us. AMS has not heard anything further from Ability One regarding producing the low fat, reduced sodium cream of mushroom soup. The Work Group now would like to explore if whether a low fat cream of mushroom soup or the reduced sodium cream of mushroom soup is readily available on the market. Cream of mushroom soup is commonly used as a base in many of the dishes made by participants. FNS will request AMS to revisit this soup for availability and cost.

D. Replacement for Pineapple Juice – Since pineapple juice is no longer available for USDA to purchase, the Work Group would like to pursue other 100% juices. Cranberry juice was suggested as a replacement; however, it would not be a suitable replacement given the products tartness. Cranberry juice cocktail is commonly sold in most stores which only contains about 27% juice. However, other juices such as white grape; cranberry-grape, cranberry-raspberry were mentioned as viable options. AMS will work with the juice industry to find an alternative for the pineapple juice.

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E. Juice Packaging – FNS discussed with Work Group members changing the packaging of the juice. Currently, the juices are packed in 46 oz aluminum cans. However, we are seeing more and more 64 oz plastic (PET) bottles in the commercial market. Some preliminary information has been gathered from AMS regarding the industry trends to help us in making a decision of whether to convert to 64 oz plastic bottles. The current guide rate is three 46-ounce cans of juice per participant. This is a total of 138 oz of juice. To keep the guide rates similar, participants would receive two 64-ounce plastic bottles, a total of 128 ounces. This is approximately 10 oz of juice less per distribution. Work Group members agreed that if this is an industry trend and would allow more competition and better pricing, they would agree with offering the juices in plastic bottles. FNS will follow-up with AMS regarding the preliminary information received to determine what is most feasible for the program.

F. Evaporated Milk – Work Group members were asked about the take rates on the evaporated milk. Some Work Group members indicated they still have folks that rely on this product as a regular part of their food package, while other members indicated it has a low take rate especially with the 1% UHT milk and instant non-fat dry milk. FNS suggested that maybe a low fat version could replace the current offering in the food package. FNS requested FSA to further explore this option to determine cost and availability.

G. Peanuts – During the last review cycle, the Work Group expressed concerns regarding a shipment error of salted peanuts received in the FDPIR program. In the past, the peanuts offered in the program were the unsalted variety. At the NAFDPIR meeting in June 2008, the Work Group agreed to stay with the unsalted peanuts for the program.

On the January 2009 conference call, Work Group members indicated that participants liked the salted peanuts and would we consider purchasing a lightly salted or reduced sodium version. FSA representative pointed out that lightly salted and reduced sodium peanuts do not have a standard. This would mean the sodium content in these peanuts would vary from vendor to vendor. By offering the salted peanuts in the package, this would increase the overall sodium content, which conflicts with the goals to lower sodium in the food package. FNS will review specification regarding sodium content to ensure unsalted peanuts are requested in the solicitation.

V. Wrap-Up

A. AMS tasks –

1. Pineapple juice replacement (see section IV. D)
2. Turkey breast (see section II. D)
3. Cream of Mushroom either low fat or reduced sodium (see section IV. C)

B. FNS

1. Guide Rates Option (see section IV. B)
2. Confirm juice packaging (see section IV. E)
3. FNS will confirm sodium content in specification for peanuts (see section IV. G)

C. FSA

1. Low fat evaporated milk (see section IV. F)
2. Butter Alternative (see section IV. A)

Meeting adjourned at 2:36 PM.